

Rescue Breaths by orphan_account

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Summary:

Something wasn't right... was it really a nightmare that had woken him?

The hair on the back of his neck was standing up, almost as if they were being watched.

The Hopper-Byers family (+Nancy) have a terrifying brush with death when a figure from their past returns with the intent to get rid of them for good.

Rescue Breaths

Author's Note:

Hi all! I wrote this because I received an anonymous prompt to write a fic where Nancy and Jonathan have to save each others lives in an intense situation (Bonus points if El saves someone with her powers). So I amped the drama WAAAAAY up because I'm trash and couldn't resist the feels. Hope you enjoy!

When Jonathan sat up in bed that night, it wouldn't have been the first time he was unexpectedly roused by a nightmare. The boy rubbed his hands across his face, panting heavily as cold sweat dripped into his eyes from beneath his messy, brown fringe. His heavy breaths caused him to let loose a brief coughing spell, a result of the seasonal cold that was all too common for the chilly January weather, hardly allowing him to take a solid breath in through his stuffed nose. With a groan, he turned his head to make sure he hadn't woken Nancy up. Indeed, his girlfriend continued to slumber peacefully beside him.

...But something wasn't right. Was it really a nightmare that had woken him? The hair on the back of his neck was standing up, almost as if they were being watched; he couldn't recall that happening since that fateful night nearly two years ago when the Demogorgon had materialized within his living room. He tried to brush it off as a mere side effect of the anxiety that came along with bad dreams, but somehow, he knew that this went deeper than that.

He looked briefly around the room from his bed; nothing appeared to be out of place. Hesitantly, he stood up and crossed the room with the intent of switching on the lights, but before he got there, he heard a slight squish as he stepped on the carpet, which was damp beneath his socks. Beyond confused, he turned on the light and took in the shape of the absorbed puddle on the floor, which was leading beneath the door and into the hallway. A horrible sense of foreboding began to brew in his gut, and he quickly struggled to clear his airways so that he could identify the substance. And when he finally bent down and caught a faint whiff of it, his paranoia was justified.

Gasoline.

His eyes automatically darted to the window, and he bolted across the room to open the blinds, which he now realized hadn't been drawn before he'd gone to sleep. There was an unfamiliar black van parked outside, but it was positioned a decent distance away from the house. And standing outside of it, he caught a glimpse of... no, it couldn't be. Not him.

A white-haired individual who very much resembled Dr. Martin Brenner.

And apparently, he had seen him, as well. He appeared to be motioning to someone who must have been positioned closer to the house outside of Jonathan's view, and his entire body went rigid with the knowledge of what was about to happen.

Without even bothering to wake her up, he swept Nancy into his arms and rushed her out of his room. "Jonathan, what the hell—" she murmured, drowsily beating her arm against his chest with disapproval.

"NANCY, WAKE UP!" he cried, shaking her briefly before setting her on her feet. "Just get outside now!"

"Jon, what's going on—" she started to say, but she abruptly stopped mid-sentence as the far side of the house appeared to ignite with a loud *whoosh*.

"Outside!" Jonathan yelled over the roar of the flames, pushing her vigorously toward the front door before the flames traveled too far. And although he'd gotten her closer to safety, he himself turned around and sprinted into the oncoming threat of the blaze, where the rest of his family was unaware of the attempt being made on their lives, not knowing nor caring that Nancy was screaming for him to join her.

He pounded on the door to his mother and stepfather's bedroom before throwing it open with a smack. "THEY SET THE HOUSE ON FIRE!" he yelled. "We need to get Will and El!"

His mother still appeared slightly groggy and confused as she threw her legs over the side of the bed, but Hopper sprang immediately to action, racing towards his daughter's room which had once served as the Byers' storage space. As he entered El's bedroom to collect her, Jonathan quickly ushered his mother out of her room and scanned the rapidly deteriorating living room. Thankfully, it looked like Nancy had made it outside, but the wooden frame of the front door was completely engulfed by the flames. Cursing silently, he steered his mother toward the nearest window instead. "Get outside and stay with Nancy!" he demanded as he heaved the glass pane open, hissing in pain as it began to scorch his hand. "I have to help Hop!"

"Jonathan, get out here—" he heard her begin to argue after he'd pushed her through, but he ignored her protests and ran back toward the main hallway as soon as he'd helped her through the opening. He approached Will's bedroom, holding his arm over his eyes as the smoke began to obscure his vision.

"Will! Are you in there?" he cried, coughing from deep within his chest as the heat increased. He tried to open the door, but the knob was white hot when he touched it. He sprang backwards, looking in the direction of El's room to make sure Hopper had gotten Will out already. However, his heart jumped into his throat when he saw his stepfather holding only El in his arms.

"WILL!" he screamed desperately, trying to kick down the wooden door. At this point, if it caused the hallway to come crashing down on him, it was a risk he had to be willing to take if there was any chance he could save his brother.

Thankfully, the door eventually flew off its hinges, but the opening remained intact for now. However, the room was almost completely destroyed; the fire had obviously been started from here. They must have thrown a flame in through the open window. Clouds of smoke poured out from the doorway, and Jonathan took a deep gasp of the somewhat cleaner air in the hallway before ducking into the bedroom. "Will... where are you?" he coughed, crouching close to the floor in an attempt to see through the fumes.

"Jon—J-Jona—" he heard faintly to his left between coughs.

“Will!” he cried, crawling as fast as he could towards his younger brother, who had managed to push himself into the last untouched corner of the room near his closet. He’d always been good at hiding, after all, but it wasn’t doing him much good apart from keeping him from being burned alive for the moment being.

He was about to help him up, but Hopper beat him to it when he rushed in, having already deposited El outside. The chief threw the younger boy over his shoulder while beckoning towards the eldest to follow him in the direction of the kitchen, which was currently the part of the house that was safest to escape through. Jonathan obeyed, trying to keep his eyes focused on his stepfather’s back as he moved so he didn’t lose sight of where they were going.

“Brenner—” Jonathan hacked out. “And his guys—are they...?”

“Most of them left... Probably wanted this to look like an accident,” Hopper managed, speaking through a piece of fabric he’d wrapped around his nose and mouth. Jonathan briefly considered why he hadn’t thought of that earlier, but there was no time to find something now. Frankly, there was barely anything left to find, and it looked to him as if Hopper had resourcefully fashioned his mask from a haphazardly torn piece of his mother’s long nightgown. “El dealt with the rest though.”

“Hop, is everyone alright—” he began to choke out, worried about the rest of his family outside where there could be more of the bad men waiting in the wings.

But he was abruptly cut off as something heavy hit his back with full force, knocking his head to the burning floor. A small cry of pain left his mouth before everything went black.

Nancy wrung her hands anxiously as the Hopper-Byers’ home continued to fall apart before her eyes. El was slumped exhaustedly beside her, her head curled into the older girl’s lap as her nose continued to bleed. It had taken the grand majority of her energy to knock Brenner’s remaining henchmen unconscious with hurtled pieces of debris, but the distraction had allowed Joyce to get into the Pinto and speed away towards the nearest neighbor’s house so that

she could call for help.

Hopper had run back inside nearly three minutes ago to help look for Will among the flames, and she was beginning to get a bad feeling about the outcome of his search. Unable to sit around any longer, she gently laid El on the ground beside her and jumped to her feet, carefully approaching the blaze. She was about to yell inside, but she gasped as Hopper suddenly appeared with the younger Byers brother slung over his shoulder. "Smart kid grabbed his walkie!" he exclaimed, motioning to the device clenched in his hand as he laid him out beside his stepsister. "Call for help!"

Nancy seized it and quickly put out a demand to the rest of the party, instructing her brother or whoever heard the message first to call 911. However, just as she'd finished, she realized her boyfriend was still missing. "Hopper, where's Jonathan?!" she demanded.

"What? He was right behind me," He replied, confused as he turned around, but a dark look fell across his features as soon as he registered the teenager's absence. "SHIT!"

He ran back inside, ducking to avoid the falling overhang, and as stupid as it probably was, Nancy followed him, pulling the hem of her shirt over her face to protect herself. However, she ended up inhaling a good amount of smoke anyway, screaming at the top of her lungs as she recognized the fallen form of her boyfriend.

Jonathan was pinned beneath a fallen beam, which appeared to have knocked him out. Hopper bent down and fixed both hands underneath the structure, attempting to lift it but failing miserably. "Help me!" he ordered, and Nancy quickly sprang forward to lend her assistance. She'd never had particularly impressive upper body strength, but she soon realized that even if they were able to lift it together, there would be no one to pull Jonathan out from underneath it. They both seemed to realize this problem at the same time, but before they could formulate a new plan, the beam suddenly became ten times lighter, and eventually, it remained floating in the air on its own.

"Get him out," El's hoarse voice said from behind, her nose bleeding even more than before as she struggled to keep the heavy object aloft

with her mind. Hopper and Nancy didn't waste another second and each grabbed one of his arms to drag him out from under the crumbling walls. As soon as he was free, El gasped and let go of the beam with an almighty crash, causing the already unstable structure to shake precariously. She was utterly exhausted, but when she saw Hopper and Nancy struggling under Jonathan's dead weight, she mustered up her last bits of energy to levitate her stepbrother towards the place where Will laid outside.

Nancy's jaw dropped as she witnessed her boyfriend floating towards safety, but she quickly shook off the initial feeling of shock and began to sprint, grabbing El's arm as she went. She dragged the girl as fast as she possibly could, keeping an eye on Jonathan's body ahead to make sure he didn't fall through the flames, and with one last push, they dove through the last intact window into the crisp air outside, Hopper ducking behind them just as the opening gave way and collapsed.

The group laid panting and retching in the puddles of melted snow surrounding the charred area, but Nancy began to panic when she realized her boyfriend's chest was the only one not moving.

"JON!" she exclaimed between coughs, weakly dragging herself to his side. She laid her hand against his chest and began to shake him, but she received no response. She could still feel his pulse in his neck, but it was horrifyingly weak, and although his face was covered in soot, she could see that his lips were tinged blue from lack of oxygen. "He isn't breathing!" she sobbed, pulling herself upright so she could lean over him. "What should I do?!" she demanded. "Chief, *tell me what to do!*"

As he approached the fallen teenager, Hopper's thoughts raced back to the day he and Joyce had to give Will CPR a couple of years ago after retrieving him in the Upside Down. He could only pray that Jonathan would fare just as well as his brother had under the same treatment. He repeated to Nancy almost verbatim the same words he'd spoken to Joyce. "Listen, Nancy: I need you to tilt his head back and lift his chin. Can you do that for me?"

She nodded, frantically following his orders as he placed his hands over Jonathan's heart and began to perform chest compressions,

softly counting as he pressed down repeatedly against his sternum to circulate any oxygen-rich blood remaining in his body. "Have you ever done rescue breaths before?"

She shook her head, tears spilling down her face. "I've learned about it in health class, but I've never actually done it."

"Okay, then here's what I need you to do," he told her, trying to keep his voice calm and level. "When I say so, you're going to pinch his nose and breathe into his mouth twice. One second, then pause, and then breathe for him again. Can you do that?"

She nodded her understanding once again. "Yes," she replied, propping Jonathan's head back so that she was ready when he told her. She struggled to keep her composure as she stared down at his blank face, devoid of anything resembling life. "Please wake up, Jonathan," she whispered, touching her hand lovingly to his pale cheek. "We can't lose you."

Hopper continued to count with each pump of Jonathan's heart until he reached 30, at which point he turned to Nancy. "And breathe!"

She closed her lips over his and emptied a steady breath of air into his lungs. As the chief had instructed, she briefly pulled away before lowering herself down again and repeating, her eyes swimming with tears when he remained perfectly still. "Breathe, Jonathan!" she begged, slapping his cheek in desperation. "C'mon, you have to *breathe!*"

"Jonathan?" a small voice whispered. Nancy turned her head and found a disoriented Will starting to sit up, gazing with horror at his older brother. "Nancy, what's wrong with him?!"

She opened her mouth to answer, but closed it when she found that she couldn't bear to speak the words. Her lip trembled as the younger boy crawled on his hands and knees towards where they were trying to resuscitate his brother. "Jonathan, no, don't do this," Will choked out, his eyes overflowing with tears. "We need you here... *I* need you!"

"We *all* need you, Jonathan!" Nancy agreed, leaning down to press a

firm kiss to his forehead. "Please... *please* come back. I love you!"

She looked away in horror as Hopper resorted to beating forcefully on Jonathan's chest with his fist, hard enough to leave bruises in his skin. They could hear the faint sound of sirens in the distance as the emergency vehicles approached, and Nancy caught a glimpse of Joyce returning in the Pinto before Hopper signaled to give Jonathan another two breaths. His lips were cold against hers, despite having just been trapped in a fire, and it took everything she had not to gag at the harsh taste of smoke that coated his mouth. But suddenly, the ashy substance was inexplicably in her own mouth, and she hurriedly spit it out onto the ground before turning back to her boyfriend in shock.

There was an amorphous black mass of soot levitating out of his throat, and as Nancy suspected, a newly awoken El had weakly rolled over onto her side to face her stepbrother, shakily raising her hand out to him as she manipulated the dark cloud of matter that he had inhaled. Nancy shivered, noting the disturbing similarity to the Mind Flayer leaving Will's body last year, but if Will could survive such a horrendous experience, then perhaps his older brother would be able to pull through, as well. The Byers truly were the strongest family she knew.

Joyce had dived from the car and dropped to her son's side as her stepdaughter tried her best to save him, but she barely had time to utter a single cry before their prayers were finally answered. Jonathan's eyes flew open in a panic, and he instinctively inhaled a sharp gasp, tears filling his eyes as he struggled to cough up all that El had failed to remove from his trachea. And as soon as the black cloud of soot fell to the wet dirt beside him, Nancy lunged to take its place above him and cradled his face between her hands. "Oh, thank God!" she sobbed with relief, stroking her thumb across his cheek as he struggled. "That's it, Jon. Just breathe for us," she encouraged him, moving one of her hands to support his limp head. "We've got you."

"Oh, my poor baby!" Joyce exclaimed tearfully, carefully helping Nancy to turn him onto his side while Hopper pounded his hand firmly against his back. "Be gentle with him, Hop."

Jonathan winced painfully under his stepfather's ministrations, his entire body aching like never before, but it *did* help him to further clear out his blocked airways. Once he felt like he could take the shallowest of breaths without choking around it, he weakly rolled back and looked up at his stepfather. "E-Everyone's... alright?" he questioned, his voice weak and ragged. That was when the dam broke, and Nancy began to cry with relief as the fire engine and ambulances began to pull up.

"Yes, Jonathan, you got us out in time. We're all okay," Joyce whispered, running her fingers through his hair. "You saved us, sweetie."

"Goddammit, Jonathan! Why do you have to always worry about everyone but yourself?!" Nancy choked out, half laughing but mostly crying still. Unable to resist touching him, needing to feel that he was still alive and here with them, Nancy inched closer and delicately pulled his head into her lap, elevating his neck so he could breathe easier. "You almost *died*..." she whimpered. "You weren't breathing, and I thought—I thought that you were—" She couldn't continue that sentence, dissolving into tears at the very thought.

Still wheezing horribly, he wrapped his fingers around hers and squeezed them as tightly as he was able, looking up at her with bloodshot eyes. "I-I'm here," he gasped. "Still here..."

Suddenly, everyone else was being cleared away except for Nancy since her legs were currently serving the important role of holding Jonathan's head up, and the paramedics immediately began to treat Jonathan and Will, who had inhaled the most smoke, and El, who was still going in and out of consciousness due to her extreme fatigue. An oxygen mask was quickly placed on Jonathan's face, and his features relaxed somewhat as the clean, concentrated air filtered in around his nose and mouth. He filled his lungs with it eagerly, but his tired eyes never left his girlfriend's worried gaze.

Nancy let out a sigh of relief as he finally began to breathe semi-normally again. "I love you, you idiot," she managed to get out through her tears, smiling affectionately down at him. "Don't you *dare* scare me like that again, Byers."

Even through the thick fog his breath left on the inside of the mask, she could see him smile a bit in return, and her heart jumped into her throat. *Thank God* she was able to see that smile on his face again.

She held him tightly to her while the first responders checked his vitals and draped a shock blanket across him, but eventually, she was forced to relinquish her grasp on him when they strapped him to a gurney and hauled him up inside the ambulance. Her arms felt empty within seconds... but he was alive. The entire Hopper-Byers family was still alive that night.

And she was *damn* well going to make sure it stayed that way.

Author's Note:

So now that Jancy pretty much officially owns my soul, feel free to send me any requests/prompts you might like to see in the future!